

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE BIOMASS ENERGY EQUITY ACT OF 1999

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with my colleague, Mr. MATSUI, and our cosponsors—Mr. MCCRERY, Mr. CAMP, Mr. FOLEY, Mr. WELLER, Mr. NEAL, and Mr. THOMAS—to announce the introduction of H.R. 1731, The Biomass Energy Equity Act of 1999, legislation that will help sustain the economic and environmental benefits provided to the public by the biomass power industry in the United States. This bill is a new and improved version of H.R. 4407 that we introduced in the 105th Congress. Also, I am pleased to announce that a companion bill, S. 984, has been introduced in the Senate by Senators COLLINS and BOXER.

The biomass power industry is a unique source of renewable electricity. It generates electricity by combusting wood waste and other nonhazardous, organic materials under environmentally controlled conditions as an alternative to disposal or open-incineration of these materials. In effect, the biomass power industry makes constructive use of waste materials that would otherwise become a public liability.

Mr. Speaker, the organic materials used as fuel by this industry are gathered from the agricultural and forest-related sectors of our economy and from our urban waste streams. In addition to the jobs that are generated by this activity, a range of quantifiable benefits arise: the risk and severity of forest fires is diminished, air pollution from open burning of agricultural residues is avoided, and landfill space is preserved. In the absence of this \$7 billion per year industry, the nation would face a series of negative consequences above and beyond the loss of the renewable electricity itself.

Congress recognized the importance of the biomass power industry when it enacted a biomass energy production tax credit in 1992. Unfortunately, the production tax credit provided by this code section—due to expire this year—has never been accessible to the biomass power industry due to excessively narrow drafting. Our legislation corrects this defect in order to recognize and retain the public benefits, including the national security and system reliability benefits, of this important industry.

Mr. Speaker, when I introduced this bill last year I truly believed that this is a “good government” issue whose clear merits and environmental benefits transcend partisan and regional politics. Today, as I reintroduce the Biomass Energy Equity Act, I remain convinced of the merits of the proposal, and I would urge all of my colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—to cosponsor this important and much-needed legislation.

ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE MILES LERMAN AT THE NATIONAL CIVIC COMMEMORATION OF THE DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, April 13, Members of Congress joined with representatives of the diplomatic corps, executive and judicial branch officials, and Holocaust survivors and their families to commemorate the National Days of Remembrance in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol.

The ceremony coincided with the 60th anniversary of the voyage of the SS *St. Louis*, which set sail from Germany in April 1939, carrying more than 900 Jews away from Nazi terror. Denied entry to both Cuba and the United States, the *St. Louis* was forced to send its frightened passengers back to Europe just months before the onset of World War II. Many of them were eventually murdered in Auschwitz, Treblinka, and the other death camps of Hitler's Holocaust.

While we cannot rectify the wrongs of generations ago, we can apply the lesson of the *St. Louis* to the crises of today. In the Europe of 1999, innocent civilians are once again being deported, abused, raped and murdered. While the scale of Serbian atrocities in Kosovo does not approach the enormity of the Holocaust, the precedent that would be set by ignoring this ethnic cleansing cannot be tolerated.

Miles Lerman, the Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council since 1993, eloquently expressed the moral cost of inaction at the Days of Remembrance ceremony. “As we remember the victims of the *St. Louis* and all of the eventual victims of the Holocaust, we have a better understanding why we are in Kosovo and why the free world cannot afford to stand with their hands folded while murder and mass atrocities run rampant. This is a lesson that the world has learned in the past and cannot afford to forget.”

In addition to his responsibilities with the Holocaust Memorial Council, Miles Lerman serves as a member of the Advisory Board of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Prior to his appointment to lead the Council, Mr. Lerman directed its International Relations Committee and served as National Chairman of the Campaign to Remember. During the Holocaust, he fought as a partisan in the forests of southern Poland. He and his wife, Chris, a survivor of Auschwitz, rebuilt their lives in the United States. They have two children.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the full text of Mr. Lerman's address to the Days of Remembrance ceremony to be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

REMARKS BY MILES LERMAN, DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

The greatness of the United States of America rests on the fact that America and

its people have the courage to acknowledge its mistakes of the past and draw lessons for the future. This virtue is reflected in today's program.

The theme of today's commemoration is to remember the *St. Louis*, a ship with more than 900 Jewish refugees who were promised safe harbor in Cuba but as the ship approached Havana, their entry visas were rejected. The desperate pleas of the passengers not to be sent back to Germany and to be granted temporary entry to the United States fell on deaf ears.

When all pleas were exhausted, the *St. Louis* with its passengers had to return to Europe where many of them eventually perished in the Holocaust.

Very few countries in the World would lend their national rotunda to recall a moment in their nation's history, which should have been different than it was.

This is what makes America the great country that it is because it understands that nations must have the strength to come to terms with their own history.

America clearly understands that if it is to be the world leader among nations, it must lead the way in acknowledging its own shortcomings. It must be the first among nations to acknowledge the fact that standing by idly while genocidal crimes are being committed, is tantamount to being a partner to these crimes.

When we look back to the early years of Hitler's rise to power, it becomes clear that had the leaders of the Western nations of those days been more decisive in their actions, the outcome of history could have been quite different.

These are facts that the world can never forget.

Remembering the tragic lessons of the past can only have meaning if we apply these lessons to today and to the future.

It is encouraging to know that our nation remembers the wrongs of yesteryear and is leading the way in finding solutions to injustices that have been lingering on for over 50 years.

Last December, the State Department jointly with the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, co-chaired an International Conference on Holocaust-era assets.

Forty-four nations participated in this Conference, which produced very encouraging results. These results can be attributed to the fact that the U.S. Government has set the tone by creating a Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States. This Commission was charged by the President to explore whether all U.S. agencies have acted judiciously regarding the restitution of all Nazi-era assets to the rightful owners.

This Presidential Commission is hard at work to ensure that just and legal procedures will be applied to all cases at hand and will not rest until a proper resolution is found.

However, it is essential that we bear in mind that no matter how important it is to deal with the material issues and find a way to compensate the rightful owners for what is justly theirs, the last word on the Holocaust cannot be bank accounts or insurance policies.

The last word on the Holocaust must be remembrance and an ongoing process of Holocaust education.

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